A STRIP OF WILDERNESS

The PACIFIC COAST of OLYMPIC NATIONAL PARK is the graveyard of shipwrecked sailors and a feeding ground for gray whales. Here are fog-shrouded cliffs, sandy beaches, and pinnacled sea stacks. This is a damp, cool coast densely forested and richly populated by land and marine wildlife...

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I 29.6:

STOP, THINK . . .

WHETHER YOU STROLL FOR AN HOUR OR BACKPACK FOR A WEEK, ARE THE OLYMPIC BEACHES WHAT YOU EXPECTED?

–Rip currents, cold water, and hidden rocks make swimming very hazardous. There are no lifeguards.
–Logs tossing in the surf can kill.
–Weather changes quickly—from warm and sunny to cold and wet—be prepared.
–Walk cautiously on beach logs and rocks; they are slippery and can tip or roll, causing a fall.
–When parked at a trailhead or beach, try not to leave valuables in your vehicle. Avoid rip-offs.

FOR A FEW HOURS: Day Hiking

You can drive to Rialto, First, and Kalaloch Campground Beaches, but a moderate walk is required to reach most of Olympic's 57 miles (92 km.) of beaches.

Kalaloch: Fairly steep, 5-10 minute trails lead to Beaches No. 1-6 and Ruby Beach. Down on the beach, one can stroll as far as desired in this day-use area, no overnight camping is permitted. **Mora-La Push:** Hole-in-the-Wall is a wave-carved arch 1 mile (1.8 km.) north of Rialto. Second and Third Beach trails both lead about a mile (1.8 km.) through the woods to secluded beaches. **Lake Ozette:** A 3 mile (5 km.) trail made of cedar planks leads from the Ranger Station to Cape Alava. Strong hikers can hike the Alava-Sand Point-Ozette triangle (9.3 mi.-15 km.) in a day, but most make it an overnight.

BACKPACKING: A Chance to Sleep With the Surf.

Both the South and North Wilderness Coasts are open to backpackers. You can hike part-way along either coast, then retrace your steps. Through-hikers must arrange their own transportation between trailheads; there is no public transportation. Three or four days are recommended for each hike. Maximum group size is 12 persons for camping. Have a good trip.

HIKING HINTS

Dogs: are not permitted in the backcountry, and are often an infringement on the rights and experience of fellow hikers and disturb wildlife.
Terrain: is not all sand; route can be logs, forest, rocks, or cobbles.
Trail Markers: (orange and black) show beginning of of trails at beach and lakeshore.

Headland Trails: lead over points that can't be rounded. They receive minimal maintenance and are usually steep and muddy.
Creeks: must be forded; Hoh and Quilleute Rivers cannot be crossed at beach.
Bears, Skunks, Mice, Crows: will get into your food; hang it up.
Drinking Water: "Ice-tea" stain from root tannins in creeks is not harmful, but Giardia organisms can make you ill. Boil or chemically treat **all** drinking water.
Clams and Mussels: can build up toxic poisons in body tissues at certain times of year; check seasons.
Backcountry Permits: are free and required; obtain at trailhead (overnighters).
Minimize Your Impact: dismantle driftwood shelters; pack out trash; use a camp stove; don't build fire against logs. Be able to answer the question "Will anyone know that I camped here?" with a firm "No."
Winter Beach Hiking: during winter storms, very high tides, onshore winds and storm runoff make some routes impassable even at low tide. In this situation, turn back the way you came. Don't risk your life.
Strong Winds: can make tides higher than tide table indicates.
Tidal Wave: a Coast Guard helicopter will fly over the beach, advising you to leave the beach and giving time tidal wave will strike. Alert other campers nearby; then head inland to higher ground, using the trails if possible. Wait for word from Coast Guard before returning to beach. There may be more than one wave.

NEVER ATTEMPT TO HIKE AROUND A POINT OR HEADLAND ON AN INCOMING TIDE.

Rising water can cut you off from advancing or retreating. This foolish act has cost people their lives. Carry a tide table or copy tide times. KNOW when tides occur, DON'T GUESS.

DANGER: signifies points or areas that should NEVER be rounded, regardless of the tide. ALWAYS use overland trail.

CAUTION: signifies points or areas that can be rounded at low tide. If no headland trail exists, hiker may have to wait out tide until point can be safely rounded.

"DANGER" and "CAUTION" mentioned above, refer to designated areas on the map.

North Wilderness Coast Hike

Ozette to Rialto Bch. via Cape Alava (21.8 mi. - 35 km.)

Cape Alava: Watch for whales offshore. Hang food.
Ozette River: wade at low tide.
Sand Point: Bear problems—hang food high. Boil drinking water.
Yellow Banks: CAUTION—round at low tide. Use rock tunnel at medium tide. Cliffs not feasible to scale.
Norwegian Memorial to Cape Johnson: Points small. Round at low tide.
Cape Johnson: CAUTION—round at half tide – difficult to climb. Points immediately north and south of Cape are extremely dangerous and cannot be climbed, round at low tide. Lots of boulder-hopping. Rich tidepools.
Rialto Beach: Paved road 13 mi. (21 km.) to Hwy. 101 (No overnight camping So. of Ellen Ck.)

South Wilderness Coast Hike

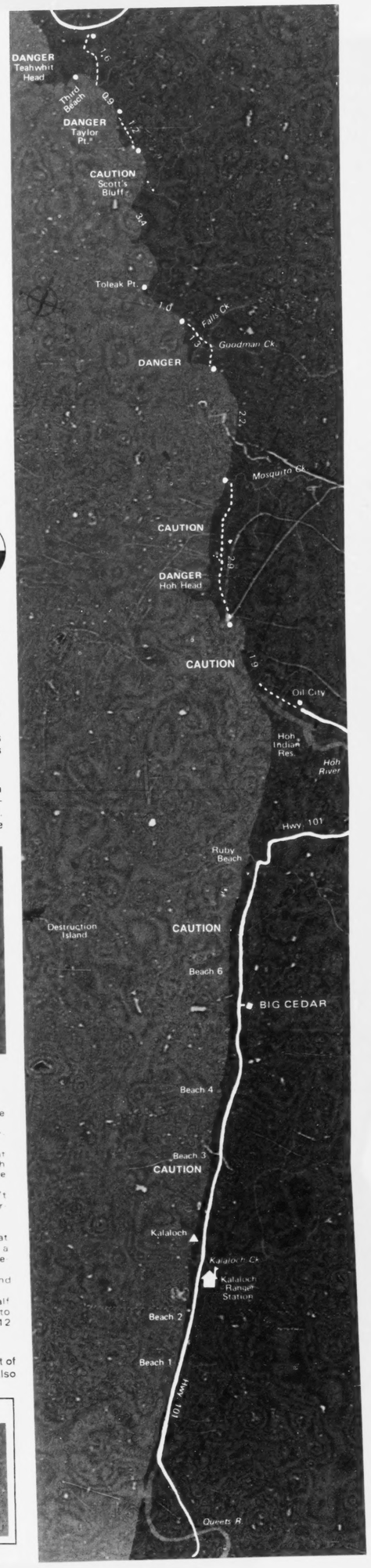
Third Beach trailhead to Oil City (15.8 mi. - 26 km.)

Teahwhit Head: DANGER—can be neither rounded nor climbed.
Taylor Point: DANGER—use overland trail.
Scott's Bluff: CAUTION—Round at low tide, climb at high. At high tide, next point south may have to be climbed.
Goodman Creek: DANGER—can't ford creek at mouth—use overland trail.
Mosquito Creek to Hoh Head: CAUTION—use beach route at low tide only (still must climb a few points). Overland trail begins at creek mouth.
Hoh Head: DANGER—use overland trail.
Oil City: No oil, no city. One half mile (.8 km.) from beach to parking area. Unpaved road 12 mi. (19.5 km.) to Hwy. 101.

All rocks and islands which lay offshore of the Olympic coastal strip are a part of Olympic National Park. Those that can not be reached by foot at low tide are also National Wildlife Refuges and are off limits to visitation.

KEY

Campground
Ranger Station
Overland Trails
Park Boundary
Roads
Mileage Markers



THE LAND: A Richness of Its Own

At Beach No. 4 uplifted rock strata offers proof that the land rose from the sea. But even as the land continues to rise, the relentless surf grinds it down in a game of give and take. Off-shore islets called "sea stacks" were once part of the mainland until wave action severed their terrestial ties. Now they stand alone—roost to a wintering bald eagle or nesting ground to a thousand sea birds.

Fog-shrouded in summer and rain-drenched in winter, the coastal forest is dense and rapid-growing. Elderberry, salal, salmonberry, ferns and other understory plants are so thick that off-trail travel is nearly impossible.

When exposed to wind-driven salt spray, Sitka spruce unexplainably develops large swellings called "burls." Back in the protected woods, majestic and aromatic Western red cedar dominates a forest which includes Western hemlock and Douglas fir. This ideal growing climate has produced one of the world's largest cedar trees; it grows just off Highway 101, 5 miles (8 km.) north of Kalaloch.

Forest wildlife seems at home on the beach. Blacktail deer feed on iodine-rich seaweed. Eagles and black bears scavenge dead fish, skunks and raccoons raid tidepools.

THE PEOPLE: Sea-Dependent and Shipwrecked

Harpooning whales from dugout canoes and netting smelt and salmon, the Quinault, Makah, and Quileute Indians lived from the sea. At Wedding Rock, south of Cape Alava, petroglyphs carved into wave-battered rocks record this ocean-oriented life. Just north of the Cape, an Ozette Indian village was buried by a mud slide 300-500 years. ago. Artifacts from this site may be viewed at the Makah Museum in Neah Bay.

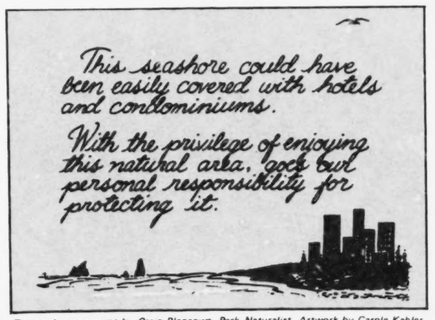
Spanish and English claimed to have explored this coast. But lack of good ports along the rocky shore prevented any permanent settlement. The U.S. Coast Guard lighthouse on Destruction Island now warns approaching boats of the same rocks that shipwreck modern crafts as easily as they did those of European explorers. The Norwegian (1903) and Chilean Memorials (1920) mark sites where virtually entire crews lost their lives.

WHILE YOU ARE HERE

The National Park Service maintains developed campgrounds at Mora (91 sites) and Kalaloch (179 sites). Digging for razor clams, smelting with dip nets, and surf fishing are popular activities at Kalaloch. A license is required for razor clams. Check limits and seasons. A short walk along any of the beaches can be a rewarding experience for beachcomber and bird enthusiast alike.

PARK NATURALISTS present free tidepool walks and campfire programs during summer. The programs are designed to help you enjoy and learn more about your park. Consult bulletin boards for schedules.

HAVE A QUESTION ? ASK A RANGER


This seashore could have been easily covered with hotels and conlominiums.
With the prisilege of enjoying this natural area, 'ock bu' personal responsibility for protecting it.

Text and arrangement by Craig Blencowe, Park Naturalist. Artwork by Carole Kahler. Published by Olympic branch of the Pacific Northwest National Parks Association.

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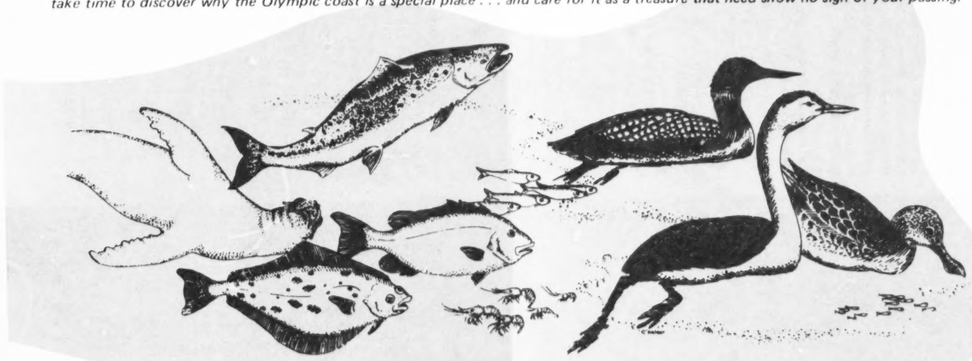
The Olympic Coast remains unchanged through thousands of years. To preserve this wilderness, the National Park Service has protected it since 1953 . . . so that each of us will have the chance to walk virgin shores and view a wild bald eagle. We hope that you will take time to discover why the Olympic coast is a special place . . . and care for it as a treasure that need show no sign of your passing.



THE SEA: A Bounty of Life

Near-shore upwelling of cooler water brings life-producing nutrients to the surface. All sea plants need these nutrients—from the microscopic luminescent plants (diatoms) to the 80 foot (25 meter) "floating forests" of kelp. In turn, these plants provide food for smaller fish, shrimp, and other tiny creatures which flow freely with the current called plankton. Schools of cod, halibut, and salmon consume these smaller fish before they themselves become food for a sea lion or other larger animal.

Daily, each gray whale strains several tons of plankton from the sea. Surprisingly, these whales do not eat the larger fish. At Kalaloch, whales can sometimes be seen "blowing" beyond the breakers. This is but a brief pause from their annual 6000 mile (9700 km.) migration from Baja California's winter calving grounds to summer feeding grounds in Alaska.

Abundant food attracts over 75 species of coastal birds, including loons, grebes, cormorants, puffins, murres, shorebirds and diving ducks.

The warm Japanese current holds coastal water temperatures to 45-55 degrees F. all year. The term "warm" can be confusing; these waters are warm enough to guarantee over 330 frost-free days annually, but cool enough to always discourage swimming.

AT THE OCEAN'S EDGE: Tidepools

Along this coast, the moon and sun exert forces that cause two high tides and two low tides every 24 hours and 50 minutes. The ebbing tide finds the shore dotted with tidepools—isolated water pockets contained among the rocks. To the tidepool creatures, low tide means exposure to drying sun rays; high tide threatens with a pounding surf, but also brings promise of fresh food. There are always the problems of finding food, avoiding enemies, and securing a place to attach one's self in the crowded tidepool.

Get down on your knees and explore a tidepool. See how its curious inhabitants handle the challenges of living in this unique environment that is sometimes land, sometimes water.

The limpet has a flattened shell to reduce the impact of crushing waves. Periwinkle snails and turban snails prevent moisture loss by sealing themselves with small trap doors. Anemones accomplish the same thing by covering their soft bodies with broken shells. Creatures unable to find a vacant rock may attach themselves to other animals. Starfish remove such "freeloaders" by special pincers used to clean their backs.

Volcano-like barnacles stand on their heads and strain minute food items from the sea with feathery feet. The hermit crab, living in an old snail shell, scavenges dead material from the tidepool's bottom.

TIDAL TID-BITS

Waves break on this coast with a force of up to 2 tons per square foot.
Trees ripped from riverbanks are carried to sea, battered by surf, and tossed up on the beach...as driftwood.
The thin-shelled razor clam can dig into the sand as fast as 12" (30 cm.) per minute.
The giant kelp can grow a foot per day—it is the world's fastest growing plant.

The sea spat out on the Olympic shore
logs and weeds and shells galore.
It offered from its cool green depths
treasures to choose, to cherish, to be LEFT.